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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

NFAC 8169-80
18 December 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment
National Intelligence Officer for Warning

FROM: 25X1
Assistant National Intelligence Officer for Near East
and South Asia

SUBJECT: Monthly Warning Assessment: Near East and South Asia

1. Community representatives met on 17 December 1980 to consider likely areas of significant concern during the coming month. Discussion touched on a wide range of topics and resulted in the general perception that there are no apparent new discordant beats in the already cacaphonous regional rock fest. The following tour d'horizon mirrors this overall critique. 25X1

2. Golan Annexation. Prime Minister Begin is maneuvering cautiously in order to avoid this potential coalition-splitter. Thus, the outlook on annexation is still clouded by party politics. While the idea has great appeal for a wide segment of Israelis, much of the political leadership and the press are not enthusiastic about implementation of any measure which would refocus world opinion and annobrium on Tel Aviv or attenuate present stresses within the Arab world. 25X1

3. Syria-Jordan. Opinion is divided as to whether Assad has gained substantially from the recent tread-rattling on the Jordanian border. The majority view is that Syria clearly demonstrated that Damascus cannot be left out of any Arab decision making calculus. Another smaller group believes however that Assad has little to show for his deployment other than a possibly increased Saudi subvention. Both groups conclude that King Hussein has been 'warned'. The Soviets probably feel relieved and pleased with the outcome which epitomizes the Arab prediliction to delay moving against a neighbor until some third "Muslim brother" steps in to hold the two sides apart in the name of unity. During the coming months we may see increased

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Syrian support for PLO-sponsored incursions into the West Bank through Jordan. Such a strategy would be designed to highlight Jordanian opposition to cross-border operations from their territory and thereby undercut any tentative support for a "Jordanian option" to the Camp David Accord process. Ongoing strained relations between Amman and Damascus appear inevitable. 25X1

4. Iran-Iraq. Both countries will continue to feel pressures of the war to a greater degree in their capitals than on the battlefield. In Iran this will be most evident in the political arena where an anti-clerical mood seems to be growing. Government handling of the conflict has not been inspiring and, in any case, Iranians are not noted for long-term solidarity on any issue. The Iranian refugee situation is also likely to worsen as winter takes hold in earnest. For Baghdad, the problems will be seen first in public disgruntlement with rationing, curtailment of electricity, and a general deterioration in the quality of life. Still, we find no compelling evidence which would suggest an imminent change of regime in either country or in the overall level of fighting at the front. 25X1

5. The Hostage Issue. Having followed the sine wave of optimism and depression regarding the hostage situation for over a year, many analysts view the current hopeful signs from Tehran with a jaundiced eye. Several believe that despite Ayatollah Khomeini's recent approval of the latest Iranian response to Washington, domestic rivalries may pose problems. Particularly worrisome is the apparent unwillingness or inability of the Islamic government to formally take control of the hostages. Whether this is merely a conscious decision to avoid internal bickering before a final settlement or a symptom of more serious problems with the militants is unclear. Additionally, Tehran retains the option of releasing some hostages and holding others ("spies, war criminal, felon") in the event that our response to the Majlis' conditions is viewed as incomplete. In summary, while all want to believe that the present negotiations will swiftly resolve the remaining differences between Washington and Tehran, objectivity requires a cautionary caveat: there are still some potential detours on the twisting road to freedom. 25X1

6. Afghanistan. One year after the invasion the Soviets have probably concluded that massive intervention was a miscalculation in both military and international terms. The insurgency remains alive and perhaps even more healthy than ever. Babrak's government enjoys little popular support. There are no signs that current Soviet troop levels are adequate to conduct a systematic pacification campaign. Rather, Afghanistan is in for more "search and destroy" with the search being largely unproductive and the destroy contributing to an already highly developed Afghan xenophobia. While the Red Army is gaining valuable combat experience, the cost may not be worth the expenditure in either military or political treasure. We expect this realization will gradually impact on Moscow during the coming months but see no immediate change in either the character or scope of the conflict. 25X1

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